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AN ANTHOLOGY

ALIEN LEGION™ STALKERS™ WILD CARDS™

CHOLLY AND FLYTRAP™

#3 IN A FOUR-ISSUE LIMITED SERIES

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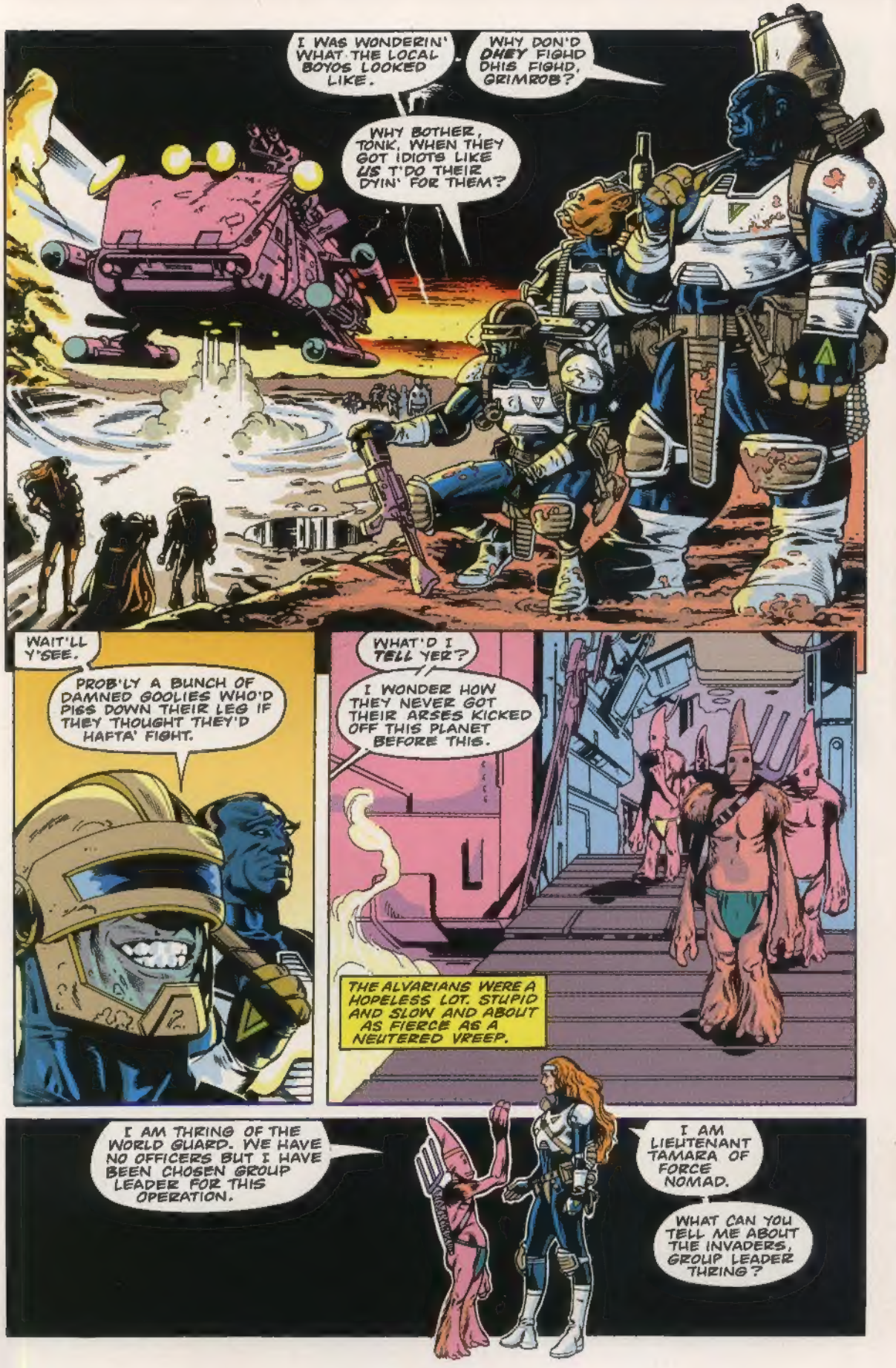
ALIEN LEGION

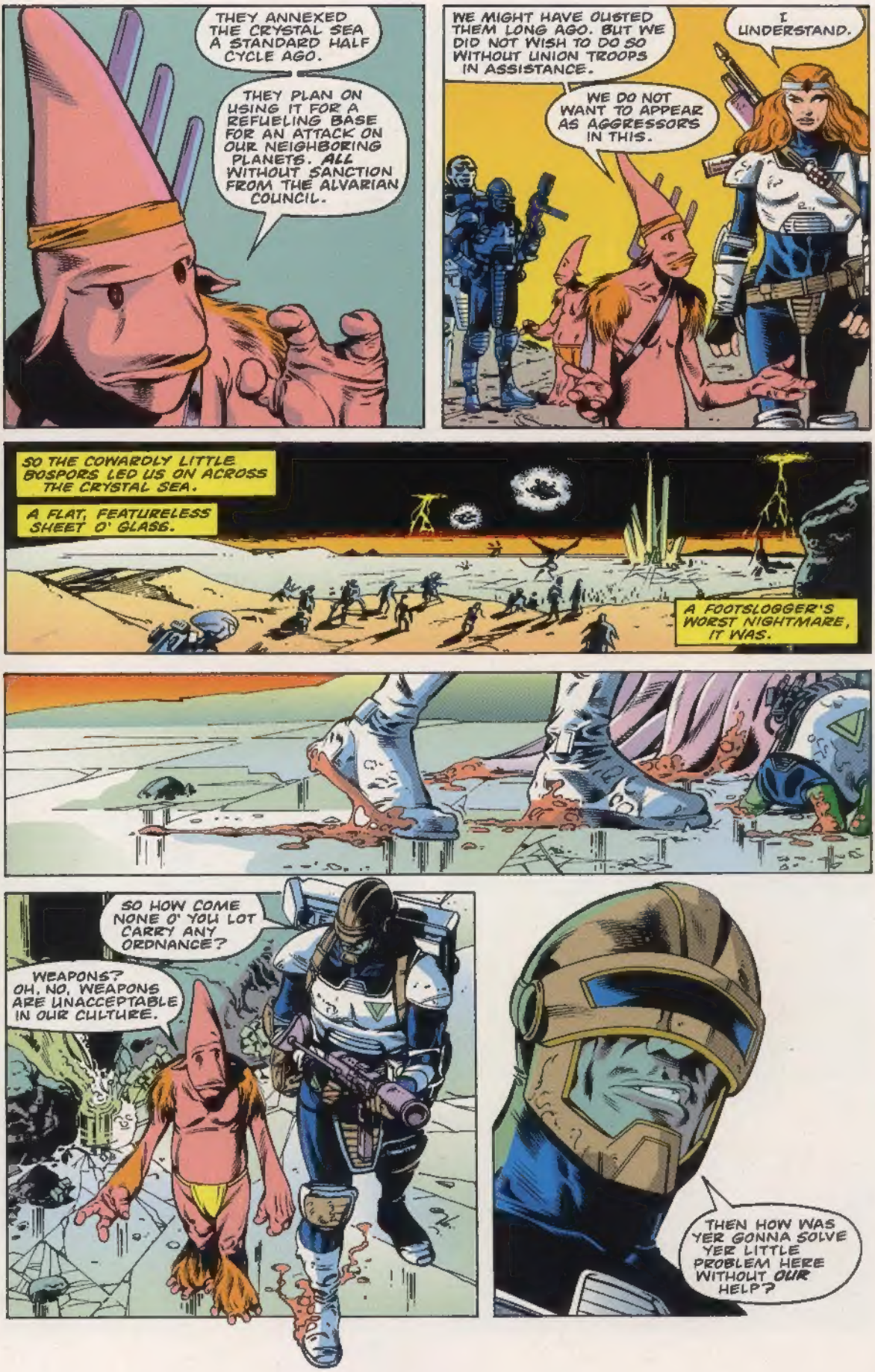
Created by Carl Potts
with Alan Zelenetz & Frank Cirocco

Footsloggers and soldiers of fortune, priests and poets, killers and cads. Culled from the dregs of the sentient races of three galaxies, battle has hardened them into the grunts of the fighting corps called Alien Legion. Sometimes peace-keeping force, sometimes shock troops, the Legion is called upon to intervene in cultural and religious wars, block punitive invasions, put down uprisings and revolutions, test the intentions of unknown alien races. Anywhere that blood of any color is spilt, where battles rage with spears or turbo-lasers, where death bestrides a ravaged planet or ghosts through the velvet vacuum of space, that's where you'll find the Legion. And as with all armed forces, Alien Legion has its elite force, the toughest of the tough, the creme de la creme, the scrapings from the bottom of the barrel. Enter Force Nomad. . .

JUGGER GRIMROD, LEGIONNAIRE FIRST RANK, REPORTING.
YOU GOT T'SCREW THINGS UP PRETTY BAD T'LAND IN NOMAD, PENAL REGIMENT OF THE ALIEN LEGION.
BUT THEN, SOME STUPID BOSPORS LIKE MESELF VOLUNTEER.
I QUESTIONS THE WISDOM OF ME DECISION ON DAYS LIKE THIS.
WE WAS DROPPED ON ALVAR 9, A MISERABLE LITTLE MUDBALL WITH TOO MUCH METHANE IN ITS ATMOSPHERE.
WHOLE BLEEDIN' PLANET PONGS LIKE A VERSCHNERDEL'S BUM.
A DEAD VERSCHNERDEL.

SOME REAL NASTIES FROM OFFWORLD HAD ANNEXED A CHUNK OF ALVAR NEAR THE SOUTHERN POLE.
THE LOCALS BITCHED AND MOANED UNTIL THE GALACTIC UNION AGREED TO SEND IN NOMAD.
THE UNION FIGURED IT HAD NOTHIN' T'LOSE. MAYBE A FEW THOUSAND OF US RAMMERS.
LIKE I SAID, NOTHIN' T'LOSE.
THIS IS FORCE NOMAD TO PIECEMAKER. WE ARE ON THE BANKS OF THE CRYSTAL SEA.
WHEN CAN WE EXPECT SOME SUPPORT FIRE?
NEGATIVE, NOMAD.
YOU HAVE TOO MUCH ELECTRO-MAGNETIC ACTIVITY GOING ON DOWN THERE. WE CAN'T PINPOINT TARGETS. WE MIGHT WIND UP STRIKING YOUR POSITIONS.
YOU'RE LIMITED TO A GROUND ASSAULT, TAMARA.
DAMN...
ALSO, YOU ARE TO BE JOINED BY A CONTINGENT OF NATIVE TROOPS TO GUIDE YOU ACROSS THE CRYSTAL SEA TO THE INVADERS' POSITIONS.
THIS MUST BE THEM NOW, MAJOR SARIGAR.
DIPLOMACY, LIEUTENANT. REMEMBER THAT WE'RE GUESTS HERE.


I WAS WONDERIN' WHAT THE LOCAL BOYOS LOOKED LIKE.
WHY DON'D DHEY FIGHD DHIS FIGHD, GRIMROB?
WHY BOTHER, TONK', WHEN THEY GOT IDIOTS LIKE US T'DO THEIR DYIN' FOR THEM?
WAIT'LL Y'SEE.
PROB'LY A BUNCH OF DAMNED GOOLIES WHO'D PISS DOWN THEIR LEG IF THEY THOUGHT THEY'D HAFTA' FIGHT.
WHAT'D I TELL YER?
I WONDER HOW THEY NEVER GOT THEIR ARSES KICKED OFF THIS PLANET BEFORE THIS.
THE ALVARIANS WERE A HOPELESS LOT. STUPID AND SLOW AND ABOUT AS FIERCE AS A NEUTERED VREEP.
I AM THRING OF THE WORLD GUARD. WE HAVE NO OFFICERS BUT I HAVE BEEN CHOSEN GROUP LEADER FOR THIS OPERATION.
I AM LIEUTENANT TAMARA OF FORCE NOMAD.
WHAT CAN YOU TELL ME ABOUT THE INVADERS, GROUP LEADER THRING?

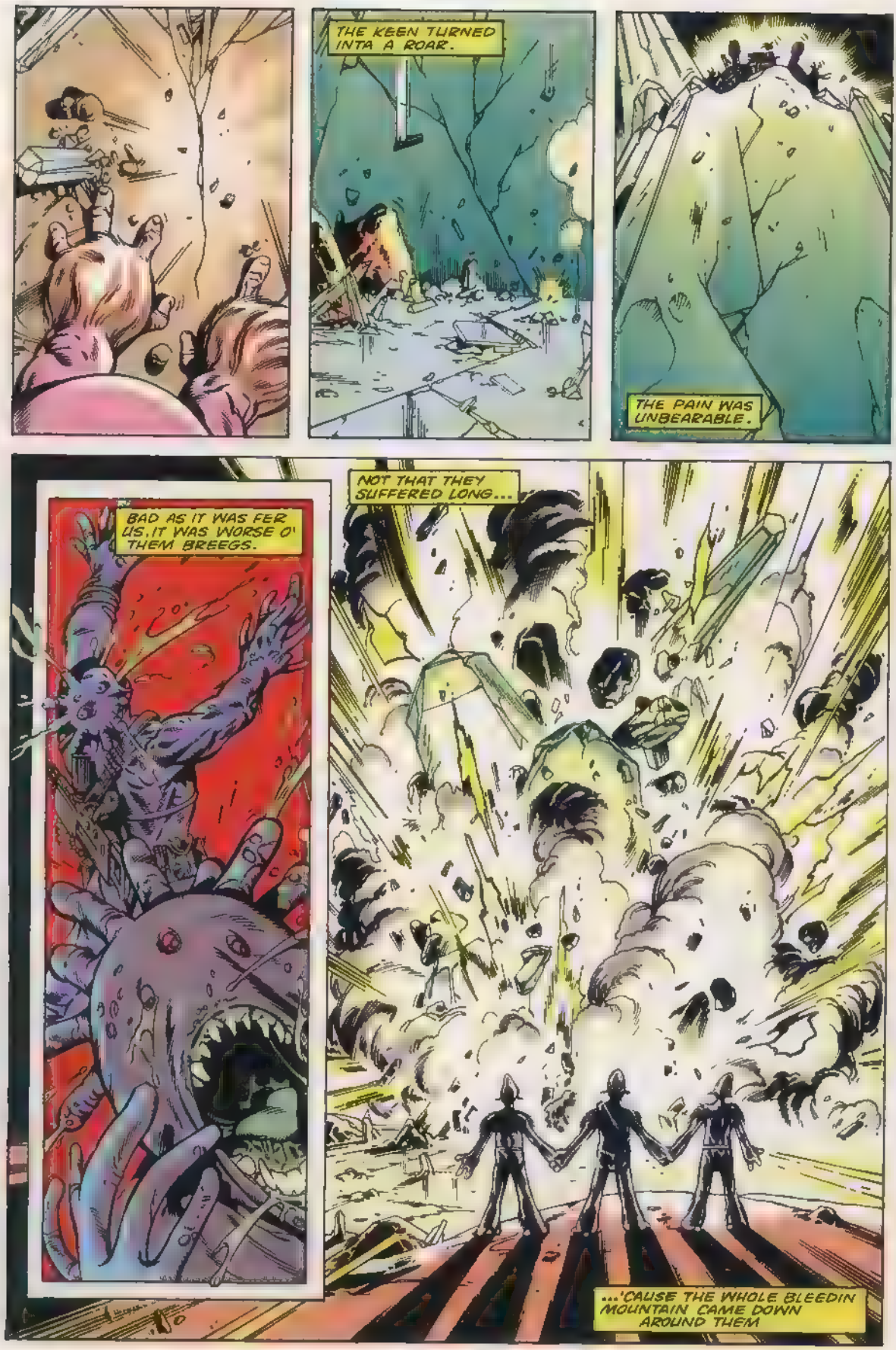

THEY ANNEXED THE CRYSTAL SEA A STANDARD HALF CYCLE AGO.
THEY PLAN ON USING IT FOR A REFUELING BASE FOR AN ATTACK ON OUR NEIGHBORING PLANETS. ALL WITHOUT SANCTION FROM THE ALVARIAN COUNCIL.
WE MIGHT HAVE OUSTED THEM LONG AGO. BUT WE DID NOT WISH TO DO SO WITHOUT UNION TROOPS IN ASSISTANCE.
I UNDERSTAND.
WE DO NOT WANT TO APPEAR AS AGGRESSORS IN THIS.
SO THE COWARDLY LITTLE BOSPORS LED US ON ACROSS THE CRYSTAL SEA.
A FLAT, FEATURELESS SHEET O' GLASS.
A FOOTSLOGGER'S WORST NIGHTMARE, IT WAS.
SO HOW COME NONE O' YOU LOT CARRY ANY ORDNANCE?
WEAPONS? OH, NO, WEAPONS ARE UNACCEPTABLE IN OUR CULTURE.
THEN HOW WAS YER GONNA SOLVE YER LITTLE PROBLEM HERE WITHOUT OUR HELP?

OH, WE HAVE OUR RESOURCES, LEGIONNAIRE.
BUT WE ALSO HAVE RELATIONS WITH THE UNION TO CONSIDER.
I DIDN'T GET A CHANCE T'ASK THE LITTLE RAMMER WHAT HE MEANT BY THAT.
A WHININ' HEL-BOMB SORT OF INTERRUPTED THINGS.
AFTER THAT IT WAS DOWN TO THE DIRTY AND BLOODY BUSINESS OF WAR.
EVERY STEP CLOSER T'THAT GLEAMIN' TOWER O' GLASS WAS PAID FOR IN NOMAD BLOOD.
THEN WE WAS INTO THE HILLS OF THEM GREAT MOUNTAINS AND THE HOVERGUNS WEREN'T GONNA HELP US HERE.
IT WAS GONNA TAKE FOOT SOLDIERS T'GET IN SPITTING RANGE OF THE BELLIGERENTS' DIGS.

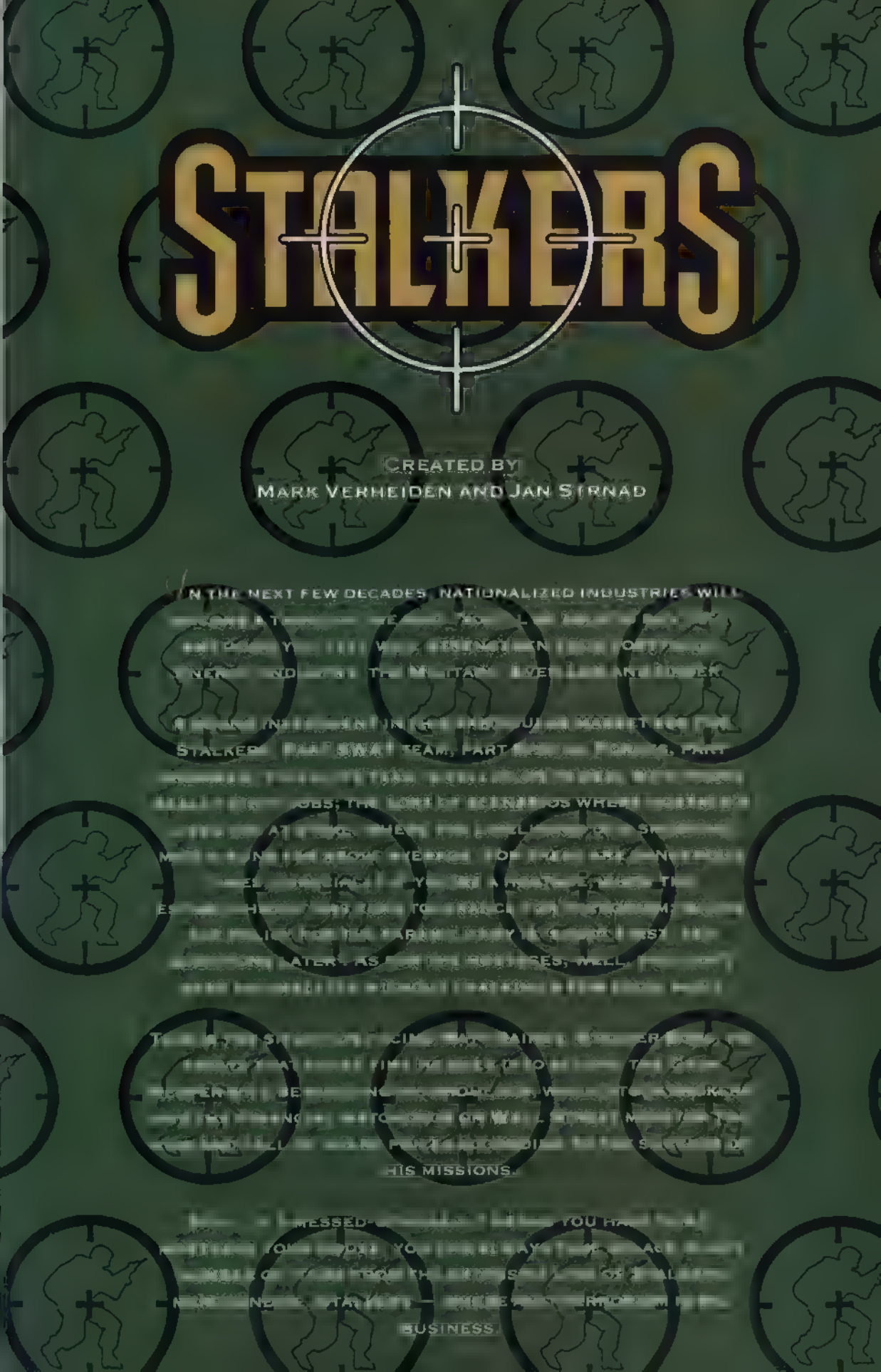
UGLY RAMMERS, THEY WAS. BREEGS, FROM THE KALON GALAXY.
WE GOT SOME REAL CHARMERS IN NOMAD. SOME THAT MAKE YER LOSE YER LUNCH T'LOOK AT 'EM
BUT THESE BOSPORS WAS REVOLTIN'.
I STUCK CLOSE T' TONK. BIG BOYO. LOTS T'HIDE BEHIND
HOLD DRACKING BEAM ON DHEM, GRIMROB!
I'M HOLDING STEADY! NOW FIRE THE BLEEDIN' THING!
AND THAT CANNON O' HIS MAKES HASH OUTTA ANYTHIN' IN OUR WAY.
FIND A COZY HOLE TO CRAWL INTA?
I AND MY COMRADES WILL DO OUR SHARE OF FIGHTING WHEN WE REACH THE INVADERS' STRONGHOLD.
ONLY ONE THING WORSE THAN A RAMMIN' LITTLE COWARD.
YEAH...
... A SMUG RAMMIN' LITTLE COWARD.

WE FOUGHT OUR WAY THROUGH THAT MAZE O' GLITTERIN' ROCK.
THE ELECTRO-MAG STORM KEPT THE GUNSHIPS AWAY AND IT WAS UP TO NOMAD.
WE'RE RAMMED, AND NO QUESTION, TAMARA. THEM HEL GUNS GOT US NAILED!
THIS IS THEIR STRONGHOLD. THERE'S A REFUELING STATION AND SOME JUMP SHIPS IN THERE.
THEY'RE NOT GOING TO GIVE UP EASY.
THEY'RE NOT GONNA GIVE UP AT ALL!
THIS IS A COCK-UP FROM GO! WE DON'T HAVE THE JUICE T'PRY THEM OUTTA THERE!
WE HAVE TO TRY, JUGGER!
EXCUSE ME..?
ON YER BIKE, HAIRBALL!
WHAT IS IT, THRING?
YOU'VE ESCORTED US FAR ENOUGH, LIEUTENANT. I AND MY COMRADES WILL CARRY THE FIGHT FROM HERE.
IF YOU WOULD ONLY PROVIDE COVERING FIRE..?

WITH NOTHIN' MORE THAN THAT SILLY STICK O' HIS, THRING CHARGED THE ENEMY.
THE OTHER LITTLE RAMMERS FOLLOWED.
ALL WE COULD DO WAS FIRE EVERYTHING WE HAD OVER 'EM.
THE STINKIN' AIR WAS FILLED WITH A KEENIN' SOUND THAT CUT RIGHT THROUGH OUR SKULLS.
IT WAS THEM RAMMIN' HAIRBALLS.
THEY WAS SINGIN':


THE KEEN TURNED INTA A ROAR.
THE PAIN WAS UNBEARABLE.
BAD AS IT WAS FER US, IT WAS WORSE O' THEM BREEGS.
NOT THAT THEY SUFFERED LONG...
...'CAUSE THE WHOLE BLEEDIN MOUNTAIN CAME DOWN AROUND THEM

RAM ME.
THEY SUNG THE BOGPORS TO DEATH.
YOU SEE, LEGIONNAIRE? OUR CULTURE DOES NOT REQUIRE WEAPONS.
I GUESS NOT. NOT WHEN EVERY ONE O' YER'S A SONIC CANNON.
GUESS NOW WE KNOW WHY DHE ALVARIAN NEBBER GOD DHEIER ARSES KICKED OFF DHIS PLANED BEFORE.
YEAH... YEAH...
GUESS YOU WERE MISDAKEN, HUH GRIMROB?
CAN'T HEAR YER, TONK. ME EARS IS STILL RINGIN'.
I SAID...
SHURRUP, WILLYUH!


STALKERS
CREATED BY
MARK VERHEIDEN AND JAN STRNAD
IN THE NEXT FEW DECADES, NATIONALIZED INDUSTRIES WILL
STALKERS, THE SWAT TEAM, PART
JOBS, THE
HIS MISSIONS.
BUSINESS.

TRANSCRIPTION, TIERNAN VERBAL NOTES, 9/12/99:

"ARRIVED PHOENIX INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT 6:35 P.M. LOCAL TIME."

"I'D COME TO GOOSE THE LOCAL FRANCHISEE INTO SETTLING A **TERRORIST SITUATION** AT SOMETHING CALLED THE "DUSTED PRAIRIE" RESORT."

LOCAL FORECAST PREDICTS A HIGH AROUND 115 -

NICE. WHEN WE'RE DONE HERE MAYBE WE CAN SPEND A COUPLE OF DAYS COOLING OFF IN **DEATH VALLEY** -

"UNTIL THIS EPISODE, MATT RAINES HAD BEEN ONE OF OUR MOST RELIABLE MANAGERS. HE'D PERSONALLY SUPERVISED 22 SEPARATE INCIDENTS OVER THE PAST FOUR YEARS, ALL WITH ACCEPTABLE LEVELS OF CIVILIAN CASUALTIES."

-YES, I **UNDERSTAND** THAT- COULD YOU PLEASE TELL MR RAINES THAT IT'S **CARTER TIERNAN** ON THE LINE - THE **C.E.O.** OF STALKERS -

-T-I-E-R-N-A-N- NO, **T-T-**

"IT WASN'T LIKE MATT TO BACK DOWN WHEN THERE WAS TROUBLE - BUT THERE WAS OBVIOUSLY A **PROBLEM**, AND BY GOD, I WAS GOING TO **SOLVE IT**."

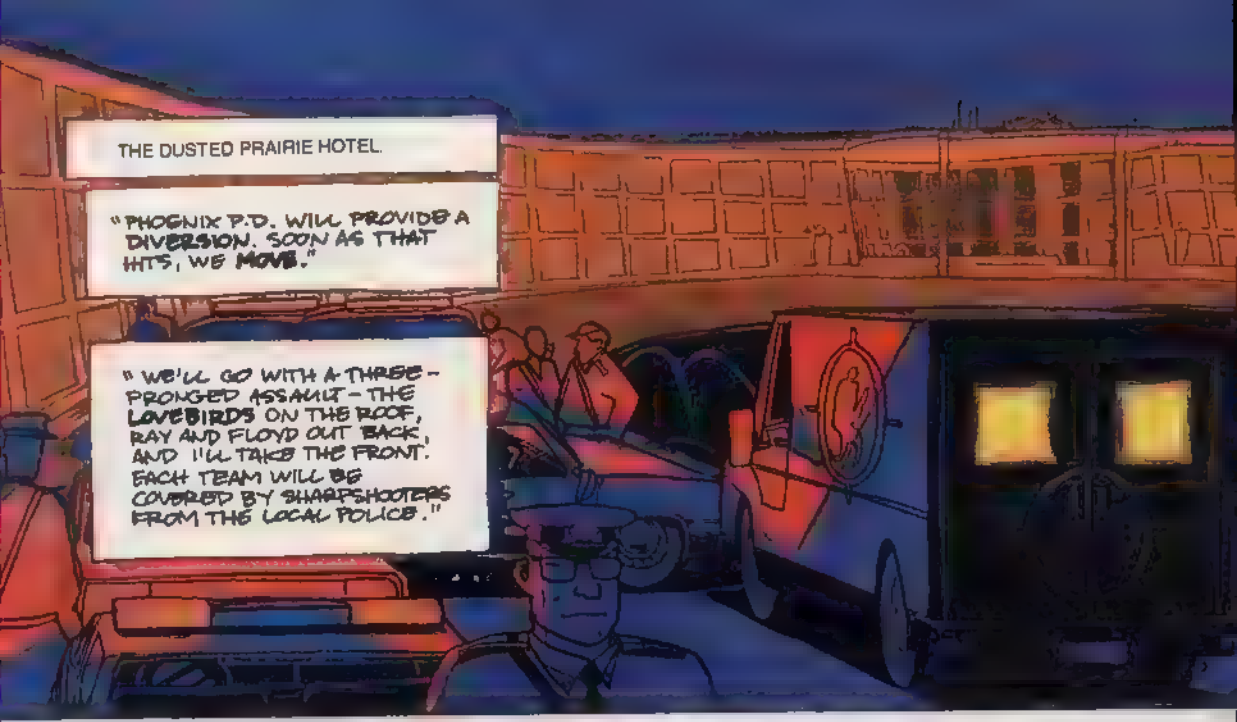
MATT, IT'S TIERNAN AGAIN. HE'LL BE HERE IN 20 MINUTES.

LET HIM COME.

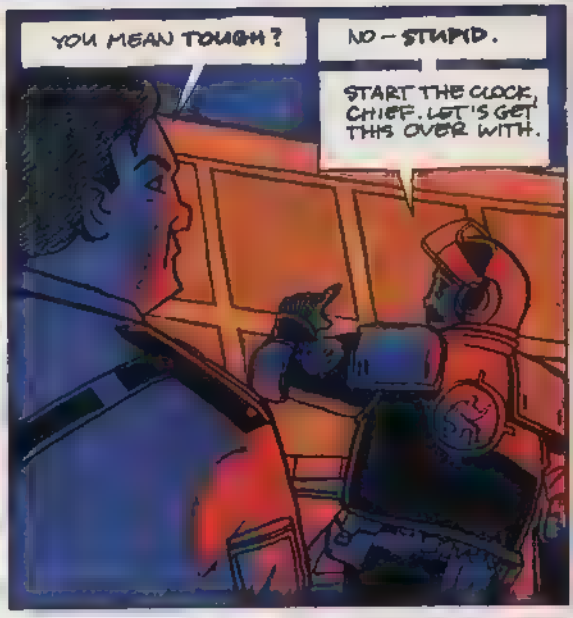
Chapter Three
BAIL OUT

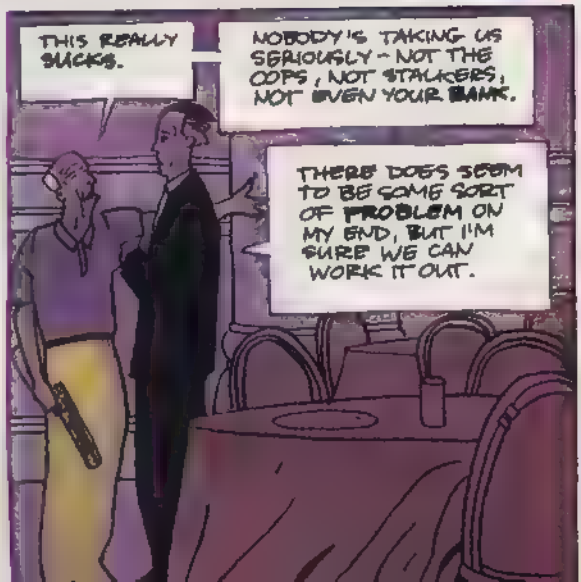
YOU'RE WAITING FOR WRITTEN AUTHORIZATION?
SINCE WHEN HAVE WE LET THAT STOP US? YOU'VE GOT ARMED TERRORISTS, CIVILIAN HOSTAGES - WE DON'T NEED A DAMN INVITATION!
THE BASTARD KILLED MY PARENTS.
WHO? LENCOV? I READ THE FILES ON THE WAY OUT - LENCOV SCREWED OVER THOUSANDS OF PEOPLE, YOUR PARENTS INCLUDED.
SO TO HELL WITH HIM. WHAT ABOUT THE OTHERS? SECURITY GUARDS, ASSISTANTS, SCARED COOKS WITH TWO KIDS AND A DOG -? YOU GOING TO LET THEM DIE, TOO?
I'M NOT LETTING ANYONE DO ANYTHING. I'M SIMPLY NOT GETTING INVOLVED.
THAT'S RIGHT, BECAUSE YOU'RE FIRED. I WANT YOU OUT OF THE OFFICE IN TWENTY MINUTES.
STALKERS' LAWYERS WILL BE IN TOUCH - I HOPE YOU HAVE AN EXTRA TEN YEARS TO FIGHT THE CIVIL SUIT WE'LL BE BRINGING AGAINST YOU FOR VIOLATING YOUR CONTRACT.
UNDER THE STALKERS CHARTER, ORGANIZATIONAL RULE NUMBER- NUMBER -
-16, MR. TIERNAN -
-NUMBER 16, I AM HEREBY TAKING COMMAND OF THIS FRANCHISE.

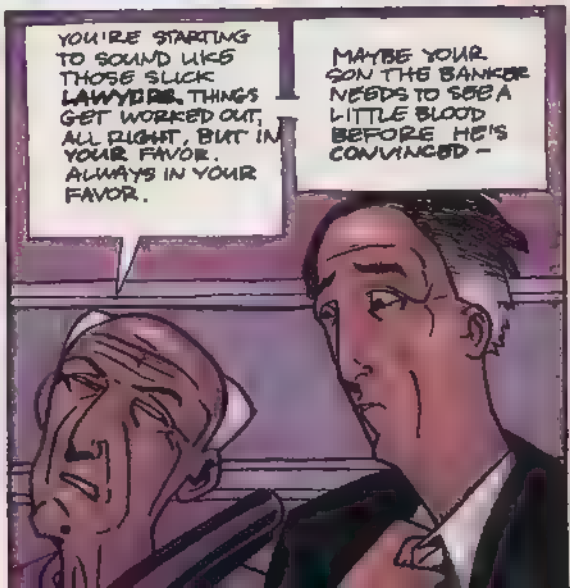
ALL RIGHT. I KNEW RAINES WAS CHICKENSHIT THE FIRST TIME I LAID EYES ON HIM -
YEAH, BILLY, YOU'RE A REGULAR MIND READER.
LET ME TELL YOU HOW THIS IS GOING TO COME DOWN. WE GO IN, BURN A FEW PERPS, SAVE THE OLD MAN -
THEN YOU AND ME'LL GET TOGETHER AFTER FOR A LITTLE WINE AND MUSIC -
THEN NOTHING. MAYBE YOU GET SOME SEXUAL KICK OUT OF BLOWING SOMEBODY'S BRAINS OUT BUT IT MAKES ME SICK.
IF WE CAN SETTLE THIS WITHOUT FIRING A SHOT, I'LL BE HAPPY.
SO WILL I. BUT IF IT COMES TO A SHOOTOUT, I WANT US READY -
HEY!
-AND THAT INCLUDES YOU, HORN DOG. KEEP YOUR MIND ON THE MISSION OR CLEAR OUT.
WE WORK AS A TEAM.
EVERYBODY IN - LET'S GO, LET'S GO -
OUR SCUMBAGS HAVE BEEN PRETTY LOOSE WITH THEIR RADIO CHATTER, SO WE KNOW THEY'RE HOLDING THE HOSTAGES IN THE MAIN BALLROOM.
THAT'S THE TARGET -

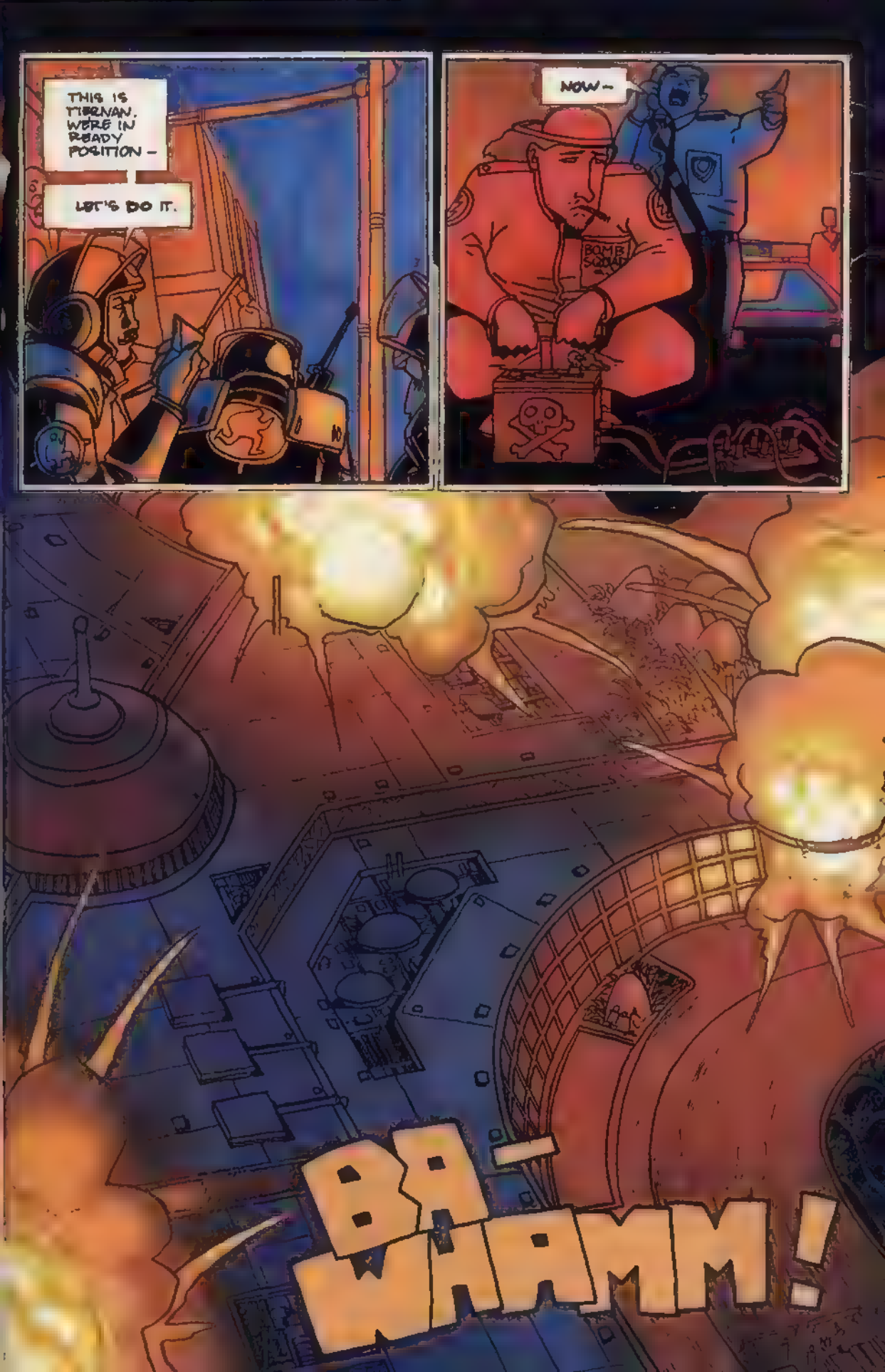

THE DUSTED PRAIRIE HOTEL.
"PHOENIX P.D. WILL PROVIDE A DIVERSION. SOON AS THAT HITS, WE MOVE."
"WE'LL GO WITH A THREE-PRONGED ASSAULT - THE LOVEBIRDS ON THE ROOF, RAY AND FLOYD OUT BACK, AND I'LL TAKE THE FRONT. EACH TEAM WILL BE COVERED BY SHARPSHOOTERS FROM THE LOCAL POLICE."

I'M CHIEF McQUAIDE, PHOENIX P.D. DIVERSION'S ALMOST SET.
HOW ARE YOUR PEOPLE?
FRESH FROM THE MINT, BUT THEY'LL DO.
SEE THAT KID BILLY?-THE ONE UP FRONT? HE REMINDS ME OF MY SON.


YOU MEAN TOUGH?
NO - STUPID.
START THE CLOCK, CHIEF. LET'S GET THIS OVER WITH.


THIS REALLY SUCKS.
NOBODY'S TAKING US SERIOUSLY - NOT THE COPS, NOT STALKERS, NOT EVEN YOUR BANK.
THERE DOES SEEM TO BE SOME SORT OF PROBLEM ON MY END, BUT I'M SURE WE CAN WORK IT OUT.


YOU'RE STARTING TO SOUND LIKE THOSE SLICK LAWYERS. THINGS GET WORKED OUT, ALL RIGHT, BUT IN YOUR FAVOR. ALWAYS IN YOUR FAVOR.
MAYBE YOUR SON THE BANKER NEEDS TO SEE A LITTLE BLOOD BEFORE HE'S CONVINCED -


THIS IS TIERNAN. WE'RE IN READY POSITION –
LET'S DO IT.
NOW –
BOMB SQUAD
BA-WHAMM!

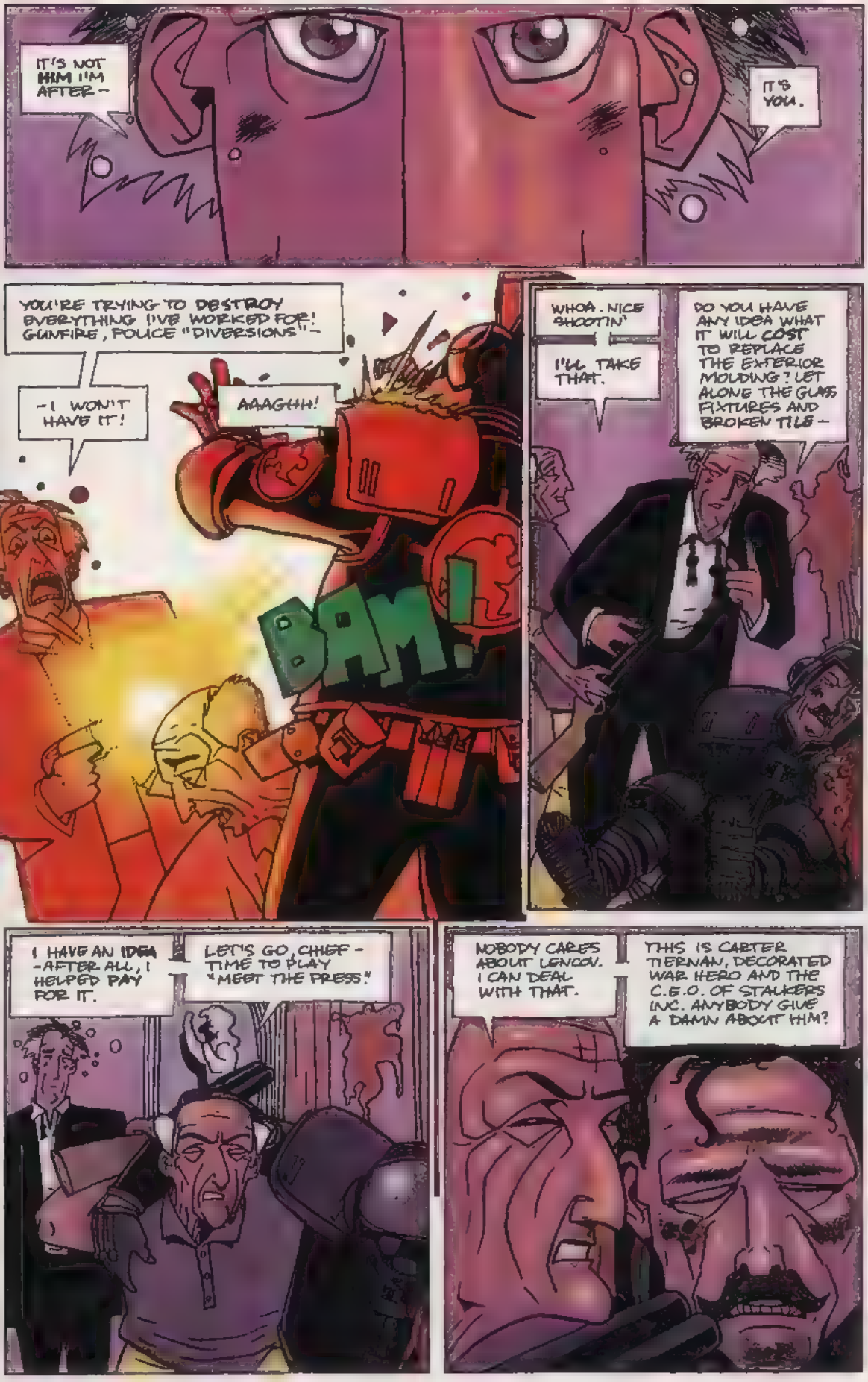
AAAAAAAAH!
THAT'S IT - LET'S DO IT!
COVER ALL THE EXITS - GO!
WHA - WHAT'S HAPPENING -
DEAR GOD -
THE HOTEL - - MY WORK -
LOOKS LIKE YOUR FRIENDS FINALLY CAME THROUGH -
- MOVE YOUR ASS -
- NO - NO -
THEY'RE RUINING EVERYTHING!
EXIT

IF THAT'S A DIVERSION, WHAT'S A FULL-SCALE ASSAULT LOOK LIKE?
IT LOOKS LIKE YOURS TRULY BLOWING 2000 ROUNDS OF DEPLETED URANIUM AMMO UP YOUR BACKSIDE –
I'VE BEEN WAITING FOR THIS MOMENT ALL MY LIFE. I'M GOING TO TEACH THESE CLOWNS A LITTLE LESSON –
YEAH, YEAH, SURE – JUST GET YOUR ASS UP THAT LADDER –
TIERNAN MAKES HIS MOVE IN UNDER A MINUTE –
TIERNAN'S NOT SO TOUGH – ONE OF THESE DAYS HE'LL BE LOOKING THE OTHER WAY, AND I'LL KICK HIS ASS, TOO –
– MAYBE I'LL TAKE OVER THE WHOLE DAMN COMPANY –
– WHA – ?
BLAM!

BRRRRIPP!
BASTARDS!
ZUKKE I'M NOT GOING DOWN WITHOUT A FIGHT-
MAYBE, MAYBE NOT-
-BUT EITHER WAY-
-YOU ARE GOING DOWN.
EEEEAAAAH

DELIVERY ENTRANCE
ARE YOU READY FOR THIS?
CAN'T WAIT -
TACKATACKATACK
BA-WHAMM!
MILK MAN! ANYBODY HOME?
WHERE THE HELL IS EVERBODY?
BEATS ME - MAYBE THEY'VE GIVEN UP -
- MAYBE THEY DIDN'T EXPECT US TO -
CHIK!
BA-WHAMM!
DELIVERY ENTRANCE

OH MY GOD - WHAT WAS THAT!
SOUNDS LIKE YOUR WOULD-BE RESCUERS FOUND ONE OF OUR BOOBY-TRAPS -
THOSE "RESCUERS" ARE MY MEN, YOU SON OF A BITCH.
GO AHEAD - TWITCH. MAKE ME HAPPY.
YOU'RE LENCOV, RIGHT? WHERE ARE THE OTHERS?
YOU - YOU'RE FROM THE POLICE -
THAT'S RIGHT. I'VE COME TO GET YOU OUT.
HERE'S THE STORY - ANYBODY TRIES TO STOP US, IT'LL BE OVER YOUR DEAD BODY.
WE'RE GOING OUTSIDE NOW, REAL CAREFUL - LIKE -
YOU TRIED TO DESTROY MY RESORT -
I'M GOING TO KILL YOU -
DAMMIT, LENCOV, PUT THAT DOWN - YOU DON'T HAVE TO KILL THIS CREEP. LET THE POLICE TAKE CARE OF HIM.


IT'S NOT HIM I'M AFTER -
IT'S YOU.
YOU'RE TRYING TO DESTROY EVERYTHING I'VE WORKED FOR! GUNFIRE, POLICE "DIVERSIONS" -
- I WON'T HAVE IT!
AAAGHH!
BAM!
WHOA. NICE SHOOTIN'
I'LL TAKE THAT.
DO YOU HAVE ANY IDEA WHAT IT WILL COST TO REPLACE THE EXTERIOR MOULDING? LET ALONE THE GLASS FIXTURES AND BROKEN TILE -
I HAVE AN IDEA - AFTER ALL, I HELPED PAY FOR IT.
LET'S GO, CHIEF - TIME TO PLAY "MEET THE PRESS."
NOBODY CARES ABOUT LENCOV. I CAN DEAL WITH THAT.
THIS IS CARTER TIERNAN, DECORATED WAR HERO AND THE C.E.O. OF STALKERS INC. ANYBODY GIVE A DAMN ABOUT HIM?

WE WANT LENCOV'S BANK LIQUIDATED AND THE MONEY USED TO REPAY SHARE-HOLDERS IN THE DUSTED PRAIRIE RESORT.
IF WE DON'T SEE NOTARIZED PAPERS ATTESTING TO THE LIQUIDATION IN FOUR HOURS, TIERNAN'S HISTORY.
STUPID. STUPID.
IF WE SEE ANY MOVEMENT FROM THE POLICE, WE'LL KILL A HOSTAGE. IF WE PICK UP ANY UNUSUAL RADIO CHATTER, WE'LL KILL A HOSTAGE.
KA-CHUNK!
AND IF THERE'S ANY SIGN OF STALKERS, WE'LL TAKE DOWN THE ENTIRE BUILDING - TIERNAN, HOSTAGES AND ALL.
YOU HAVE FOUR HOURS TO COMPLY.
YOU HAVE FOUR HOURS TO LIVE.
NEXT ISSUE: THE SHOWDOWN!

THE ADVENTURES OF CHOLLY n' FLYTRAP

STORY BY BOB BURDEN
ART BY ARTHUR SUYDAM

AS MERCENARIES FOR CRUSTACIA IN THE THIRD NOVA WAR, THE MUCKER AND I HAD JUST SPENT EIGHT WEEKS LEADING AND LOSING OUR PLATOONS AGAINST THE CHALK CLIFF FORTIFICATIONS OF AN ANGRY ENEMY WITH MORE BULLETS THAN WE HAD MEN... ALL TO SEE WHICH PETTY CAESAR'S FACE WOULD WIND UP ON THE HEAD OF A COIN... AS THE COLLAPSE CAME AND THE LOSERS SCATTERED EVERY WHICH WAY, WE HAPPENED TO PICK THE WRONG DIRECTION. FIGURING THE "ROAD LESS TRAVELED" WOULD BE THE BEST CHOICE TO ESCAPE THE WRATH OF A VICTORIOUS ARMY WE PLUNGED HEAD-LONG INTO A DRY, LEAFLESS, BONE-RIDDEN BADLANDS. WITH THE MUCKER, COACH AND A DRUMMER BOY, I WENT ON AHEAD LOOKING FOR WATER AS FLYTRAP FOLLOWED IN OUR TRACKS, DRAGGING OUR KIT AND LOOT, FALLING FURTHER AND FURTHER BEHIND EACH HOUR.
PUFF! PUFF!
WHY DON CHA GIVE THAT TIN CAN A REST, CHOLLY, THAT SUPPLY FREIGHTER CAN'T BE FAR OFF NOW. ALL WE GOTTA DO IS FOLLOW THE CRASH MARKS.
GOOD! FLYTRAP SHOULD BE ABLE TO MAKE IT BY MORN N' WITH THE REST OF OUR GEAR!
I LOVE A GOOD LAMP
CLICK! BUZZ! SOME OASIS! NOT ENOUGH WATER HERE TO DROWN A COCKTAIL FISH!

BETTER PICK UP THE DRUMMER OR YOU'LL HAVE LOST ALL YOUR PLATOON TODAY, MUCKER.
C'MON DRUMMER.. WE'RE ALMOST THERE ..
HEY CHOLLY, I THOUGHT HE WAS FROM YOUR PLATOON
*%&☆!! LOOKS LIKE SOMEONE'S BEAT US TO IT!
A FINE MESS..
GONE! EVERYTHING... MEDICINE, FOOD, PETROL STRIPPED
LOOKS LIKE THEY HAD A GOOD CRAP GAME GOING HERE
I'M NOT A CAB DRIVER..
WHAT ?
HE'S OFF HIS HEAD..
I'M NOT A CAB DRIVER. I'M A COFFEE POT!
NOTHING NOTHING ANYWHERE
AT LEAST THEY LEFT THE SHADE...
I THINK I'M GOING TO DIE HERE
STONE THE CROW!!
WHAT? WHAT IS IT!?
SOMEBODY HAD THE SAME IDEA WE DID ABOUT EIGHT OR NINE OF THEM HEADED THIS WAY FROM THE EAST!

HOW FAR OFF ?
HARD TO TELL
ARE THEY FRIEND OR FOE ?
CAN'T MAKE IT OUT..
IN THIS CIRCUMSTANTIAL DESERT THEY SHALL BE FOES NO MATTER WHO THEY ARE
BETTER GET DOWN BEFORE THEY SEE US TOO !
MY HORSE IS SICK AGAIN...
THAT MUSIC.. THAT STRANGE MUSIC... I LOVE IT ! HA ! HA ! HA !
ALL THIS JUNGLE IS TOO MUCH !
I WANT A CHICKEN POT PIE .
THEY'RE TALKIN' LIKE THEY'RE AS GONE AS THE DRUMMER LIKE THEY HAVE DESERT SICKNESS, TOO.
SOFTLY WHISPERS OF GENTLY EVEN.NG ALL ACROSS THE DOH RAN SKYLINE !
HUP !
BUP !
BUR
MUCKER ! NOW WHILE THEY RE ALL IN A CLUMP BEFORE THEY SPREAD OUT !
?!!

BOUNCES OFF ME STICKS TO YOU!
BADOW! BADOW! BADOW!
CLICK! CLICK!
GAK!
OOG!
DANG! JAMMED SMOKE STACKED A SHELL THAT'S EASY TO CLEAR
PI-DINK!
TASTE LEAD, FLEMBALLS
POW! POW!
POW!
THEY'RE ALL AROUND US! THEY'RE EVERYWHERE!
RAT-TAT-TAT-
TAT! TAT! RAT-TAT!
BEHIND ME..
I DIDN'T WANT TO GET INTO THIS WAR.
MY ASS IS GRASS!

I MEAN HOW DID I KNOW WE WERE GOING TO LOSE IT
RAT-TAT-TAT!
POW!
OOG!
?!
I'M GUT SHOT! THIS IS VERY BAD
FLUBBA! BUBBA! BUP!
THIS...
PUFF
...IS THE...
PUFFF!
...END
PUFFFF!
BLAP!
F KING AND COUNTRY AND SALTLESSNESS!
CRIPES ANOTHER ONE!
BANG!
UHT! UHT! UHT!
JAB!
JAB!
JAB!
OOF!

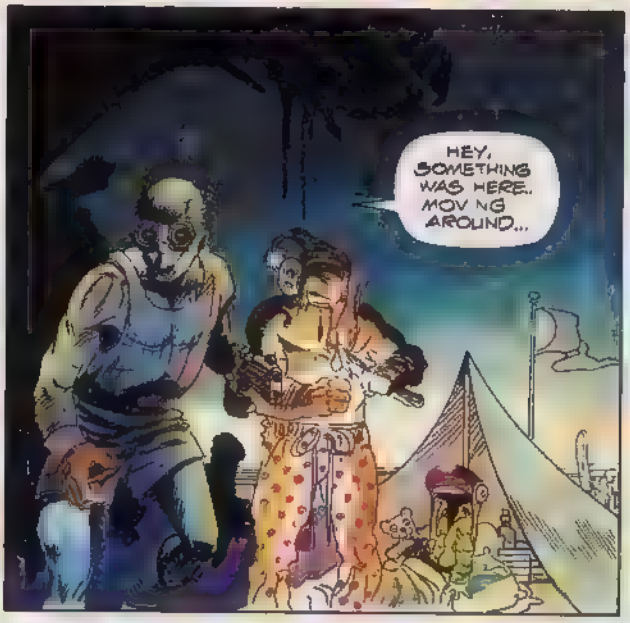
BAP!
OW!
GRUNT!
AND NOW...
OOF!
WHA?
GOODAM RUBBER KNIFE! A TOY!! YOU ☆%@!! FRUITCAKE!
I'M SORRY
Boing!
IF YOU DON'T WANT IT DOES THAT MEAN I CAN HAVE IT BACK?
HUH? CAN I? CAN I... CAN I...
FRUITCAKE!
CAN I.. CAN I.. CAN I... CAN I..
BANG!
WELL, THAT'S THE LAST OF 'EM! LET'S SEE WHAT WE BAGGED HERE

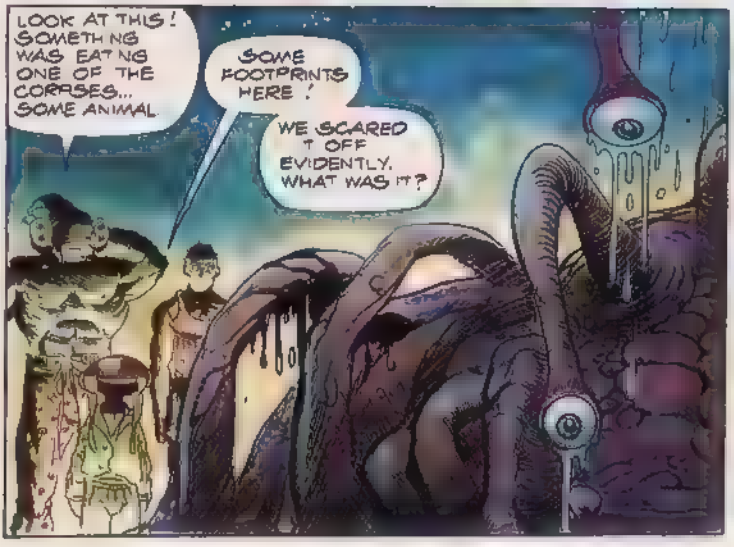
CANTEEN, DRY AS A BONE.
...INSPECTED BY #23.
...FIVE, SIX, SEVEN, EIGHT, NINE... NOT BAD FOR THE THREE OF US
YOU MEAN TWO AND A HALF..
WELL DRUMMER PULLED HIS WEIGHT FOR A MOMENT THERE AND GOT ONE.
?
HEY! WHAT'S HE GOT THERE?!
HEY YOU, COME BACK HERE!
OOF!
HE'S GOT SOMETHING, CHOLLY!
YOU LITTLE GOOFBALL! YOU'RE NOT HOLDIN' OUT ON US!
OOF! JUST SOME VITAMINS AND SALT TABLETS! THAT'S ALL, THAT'S ALL! AND A CHICKEN BONE... PUFF! PUFF!
EASY THERE, SPORT.

WHAT'S THIS SAY.. I CAN'T READ THIS CRUSTACHIAN LINGO
LET'S JUST DIVVIE IT UP AND EVERYONE TAKE CARE OF THEIR OWN SHARE.

HERE, DRUMMER, YOU GET THE "ONE PILL SHORT PILE" FOR HOLDIN' OUT ON US!
CHOMP! MUNCH! OK! IT'S GETTIN' DARK! LET'S RACK OUT FLYTRAP SHOULD MAKE IT HERE BY MORNING.
THANK YOU

LATE THAT NIGHT
UF

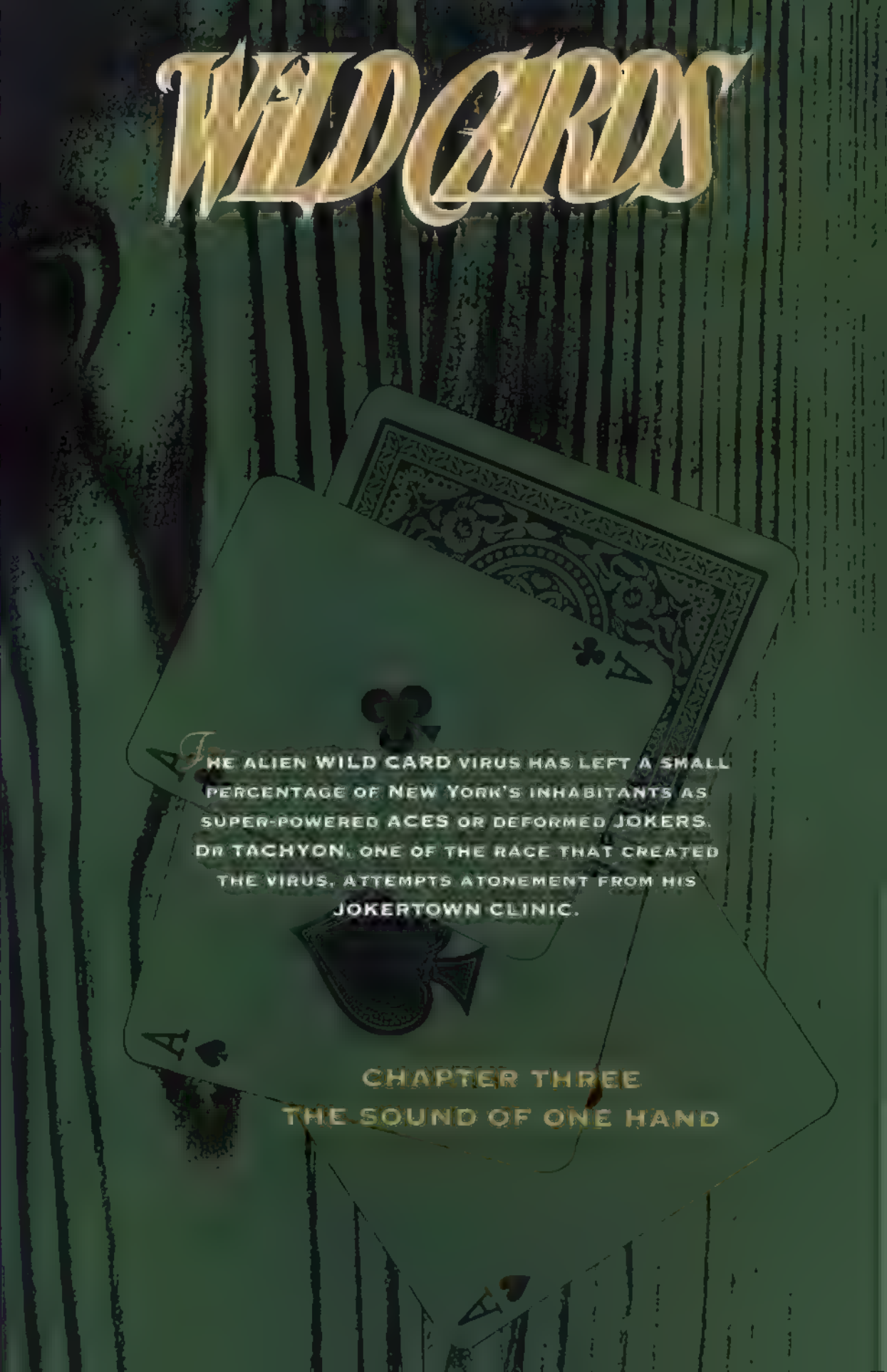

HEY, SOMETHING WAS HERE. MOV NG AROUND..


LOOK AT THIS! SOMETH NG WAS EAT NG ONE OF THE CORPSES... SOME ANIMAL
SOME FOOTPRINTS HERE!
WE SCARED T OFF EVIDENTLY. WHAT WAS IT?

FOOD!

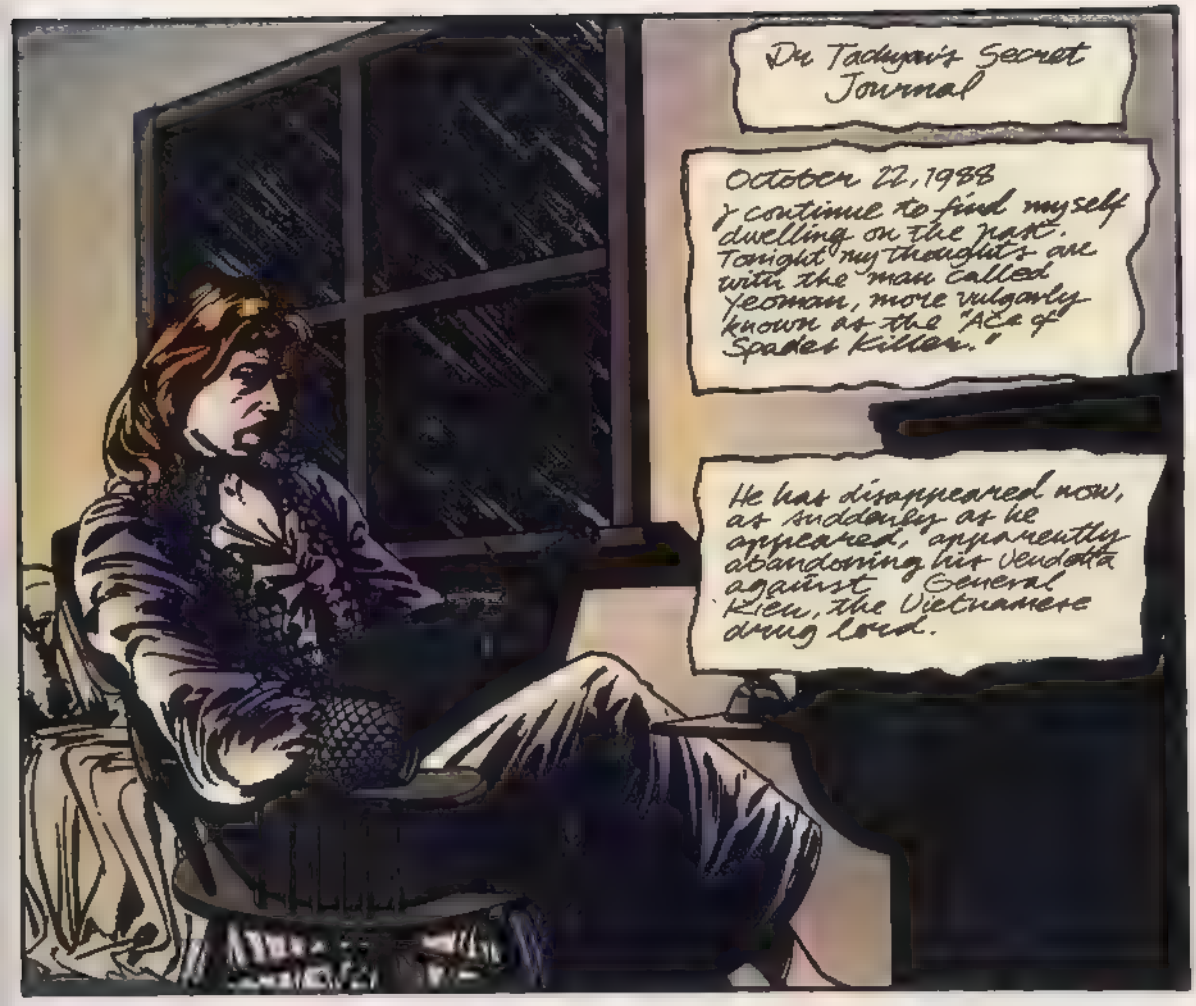
BUZZ!... TEN DEGREES AND COUNTING.
ATTA' BOY! GO GET 'EM COACH!
I SWEAR! THESE TRACKS ARE GETTING BIGGER AS WE GO ALONG!
THE DRUMMER'S RIGHT! WHAT KINDA CRITTER ARE WE FOLLOWING'?
AWWW, WE'RE ALL BUG-NUTS CRAZY!!.. WE'RE FOLLOWIN' OUR IMAGINATION, YA KNOW...
NINE... EIGHT... SEVEN. SIX...
THOSE CRUSTACHIAN VITAMINS... THEY'RE FULL OF STATIC ELECTRICITY...LOOK'T MY HAIR.
BUZZT! FIVE.. FOUR... THREE... TWO..
?
DRUMMER, LIGHT ANOTHER TORCH. THIS ONE'S GOING..
A CLIFF!
BOMBS AWAY!
WE'RE FALLING!
CONTINUED NEXT ISSUE...

WILD CARDS

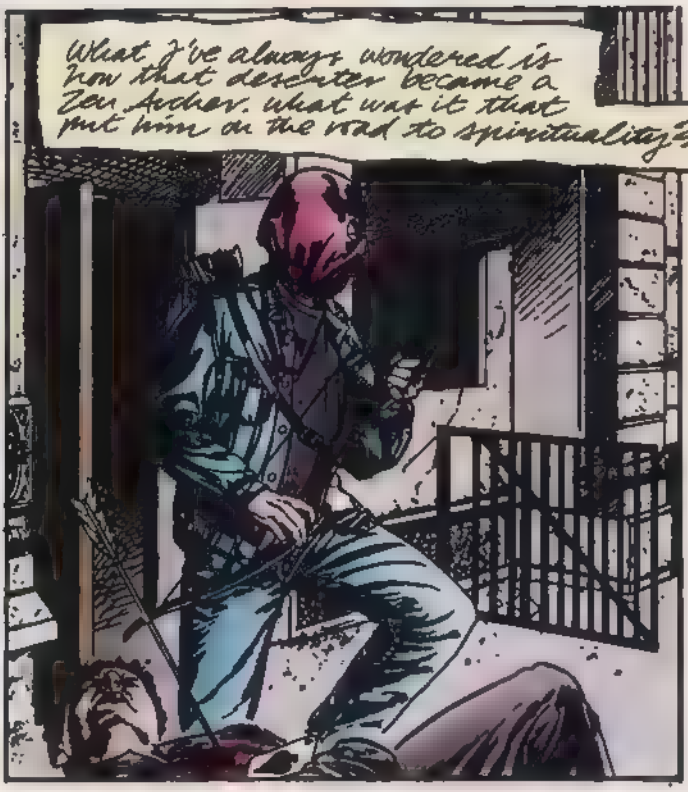


THE ALIEN WILD CARD VIRUS HAS LEFT A SMALL PERCENTAGE OF NEW YORK'S INHABITANTS AS SUPER-POWERED ACES OR DEFORMED JOKERS. DR TACHYON, ONE OF THE RACE THAT CREATED THE VIRUS, ATTEMPTS ATONEMENT FROM HIS JOKERTOWN CLINIC.

CHAPTER THREE
THE SOUND OF ONE HAND

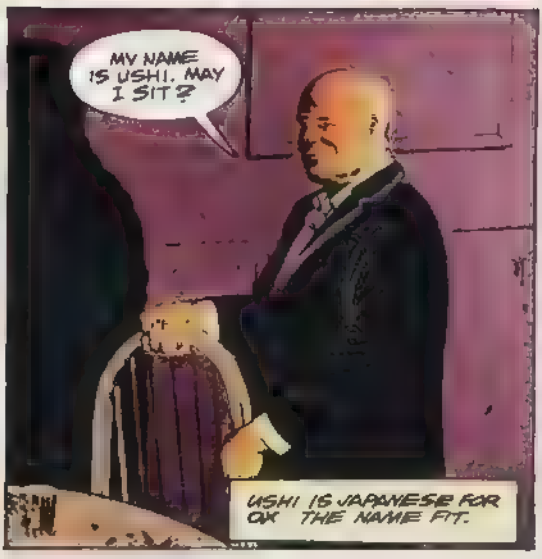

Dr Tachyon's Secret Journal
October 22, 1988
I continue to find myself dwelling on the past. Tonight my thoughts are with the man called Yeoman, more vulgarly known as the "Ace of Spades Killer."
He has disappeared now, as suddenly as he appeared, apparently abandoning his vendetta against General Kien, the Vietnamese drug lord.

I know his real name: Daniel Brennan; I know he is a deserter from Vietnam.


What I've always wondered is how that deserter became a Zen Archer. What was it that put him on the road to spirituality?

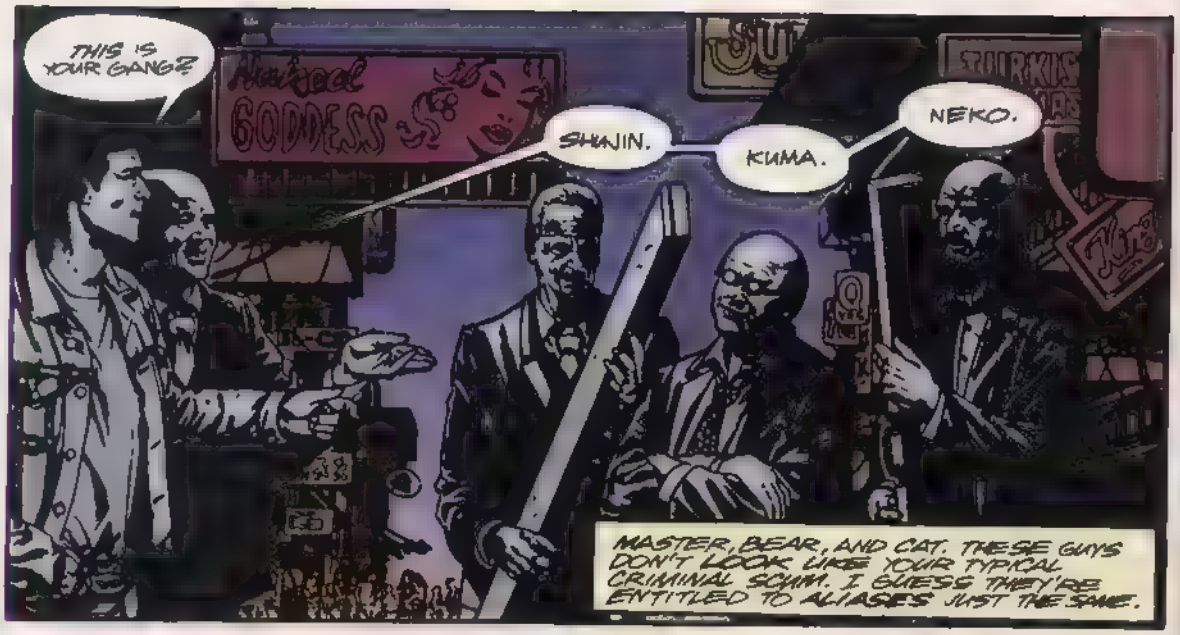
BANGKOK, THAILAND. 1975.
APPROXIMATELY.
YOU CAN'T TELL IF IT'S NIGHT OR DAY INSIDE THE NAKED GODDESS. LET ALONE WHAT YEAR IT IS.
I LIKE IT THAT WAY.

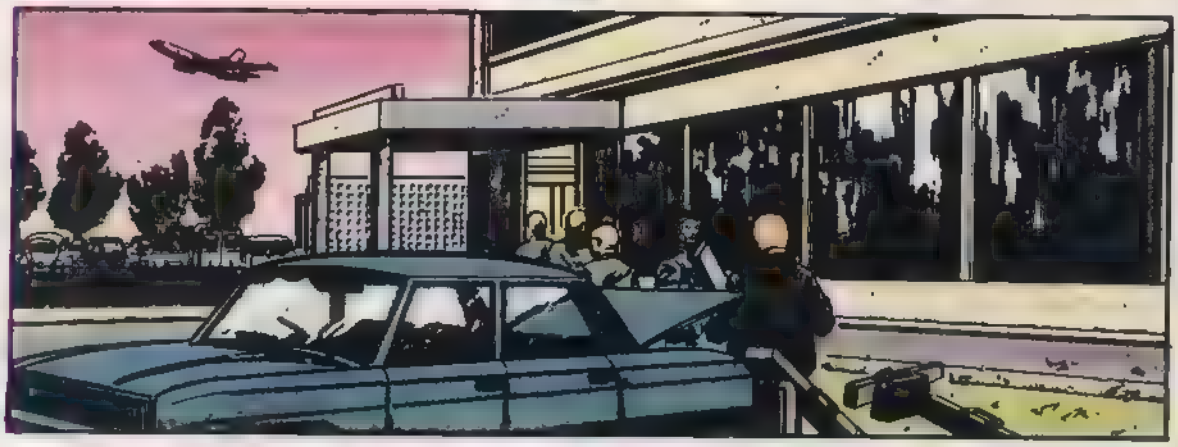
DANIEL BRENNAN?
MAYBE.


MY NAME IS USHI. MAY I SIT?
USHI IS JAPANESE FOR OX. THE NAME FIT.

A THOUSAND PARDONS, CAPTAIN! THIS HUMBLE ONE MERELY WANTED TO SHOW YOU SOMETHING.

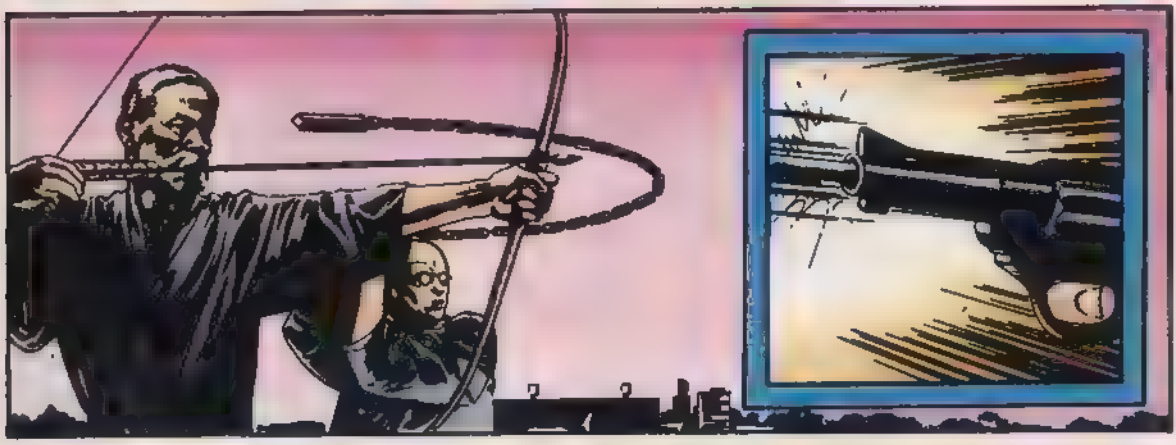
A ROCK?
A VERY VALUABLE ROCK. COLLECTORS WOULD PAY THOUSANDS FOR IT.
AND YOU, I ASSUME, KNOW WHERE TO GET MORE.
MANY MORE, CAPTAIN. MY GANG IS READY. WE NEED ONLY A HELICOPTER PILOT TO FLY US IN.
YOU ARE A PILOT. WITH A REPUTATION FOR... SHALL WE SAY, FEARLESSNESS.
RECKLESSNESS, MORE LIKELY. WHERE ARE THESE ARTIFACTS?
NOT FAR FROM HERE...
AT ANGKOR WAT. IN KAMPUCHEA.
DID I MENTION THAT WE HAVE TO BORROW A HELICOPTER FROM SOMEWHERE?


THIS IS YOUR GANG?
SHAJIN.
KUMA.
NEKO.
MASTER, BEAR, AND CAT. THESE GUYS DON'T LOOK LIKE YOUR TYPICAL CRIMINAL SCUM. I GUESS THEY'RE ENTITLED TO ALIASES JUST THE SAME.

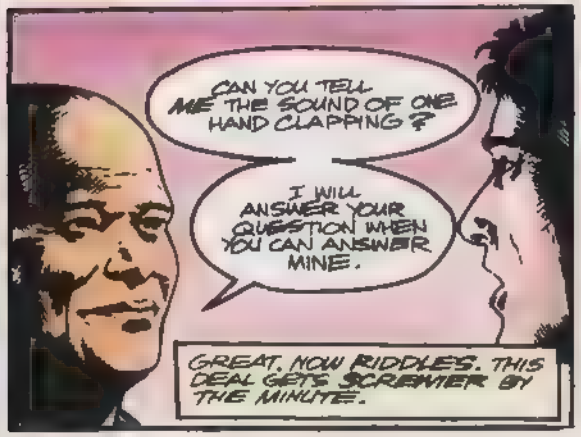


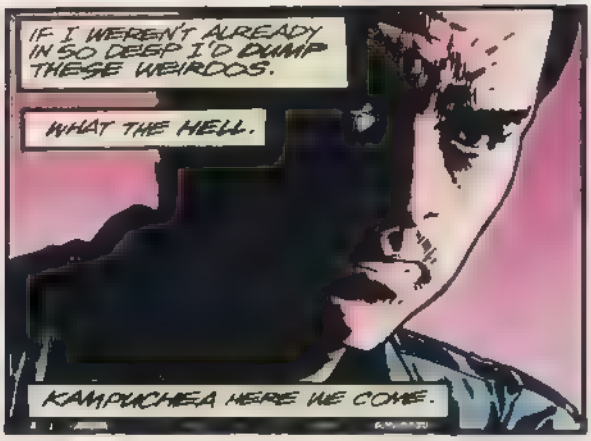
CAN YOU FLY THIS ONE?
I GUESS. YOU MUST BE BRINGING BACK A LOT OF ROCKS.

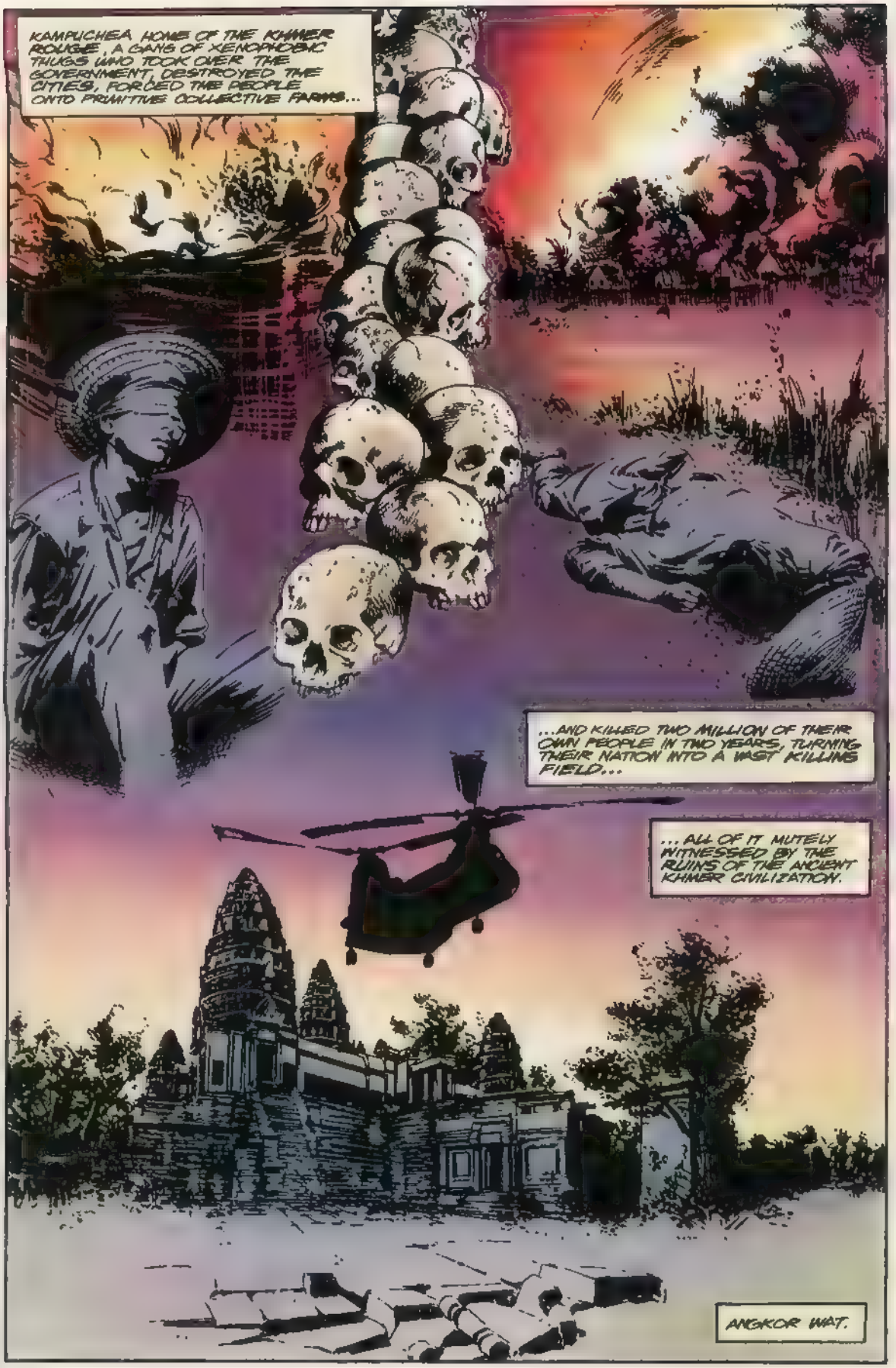
WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?

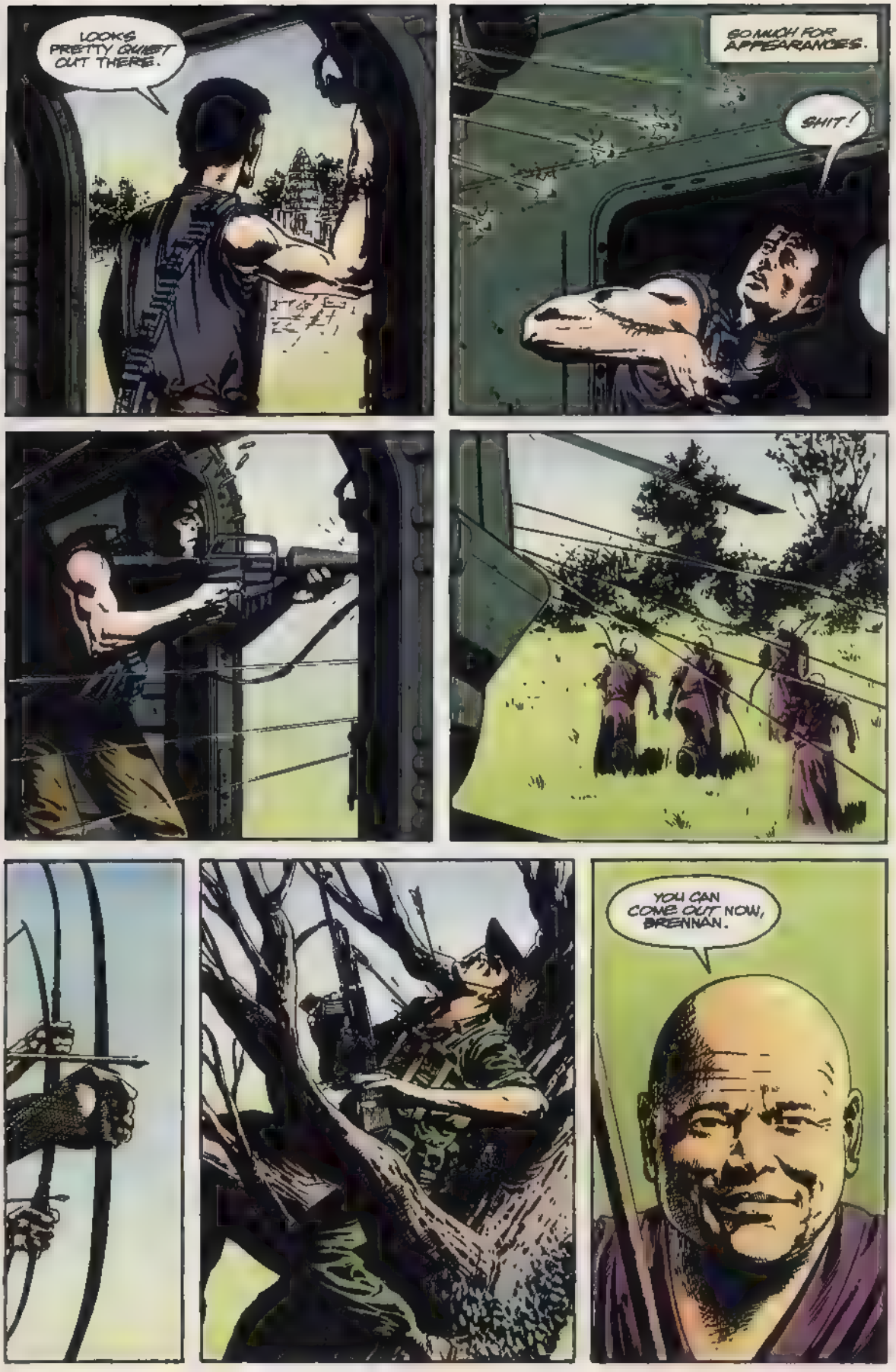


WHO ARE YOU GUYS?


CAN YOU TELL ME THE SOUND OF ONE HAND CLAPPING?
I WILL ANSWER YOUR QUESTION WHEN YOU CAN ANSWER MINE.
GREAT. NOW RIDDLES. THIS DEAL GETS SCREWIER BY THE MINUTE.


IF I WEREN'T ALREADY IN SO DEEP I'D DUMP THESE WEIRDOS.
WHAT THE HELL.
KAMPUCHEA HERE WE COME.


KAMPUCHEA, HOME OF THE KHMER ROUGE, A GANG OF XENOPHOBIC THUGS WHO TOOK OVER THE GOVERNMENT, DESTROYED THE CITIES, FORCED THE PEOPLE ONTO PRIMITIVE COLLECTIVE FARMS...
...AND KILLED TWO MILLION OF THEIR OWN PEOPLE IN TWO YEARS, TURNING THEIR NATION INTO A VAST KILLING FIELD...
...ALL OF IT MUTELY WITNESSED BY THE RUINS OF THE ANCIENT KHMER CIVILIZATION.
ANGKOR WAT.


LOOKS PRETTY QUIET OUT THERE.
SO MUCH FOR APPEARANCES.
SHIT!
YOU CAN COME OUT NOW, BRENNAN.

YOU SAID THE AREA WAS CLEAN. HOW ARE WE SUPPOSED TO GET THESE ARTIFACTS OUT WITH THE KHMER ROUGE SHOOTING AT US?
WELL, I MISLED YOU A LITTLE.
HOW "LITTLE"?
WE'RE NOT HERE FOR ARTIFACTS. WE'RE HERE TO TAKE OUT PEOPLE.
OH NO. I'VE SEEN THAT MOVIE. THE TOUGH GUYS HELP THE INNOCENT VILLAGERS. EVERYBODY DIES.
EVERYBODY MUST DIE EVENTUALLY. IT IS ALL PART OF SAMSARA.
NOT ME. NOT YET.
THEN WHY HAVE YOU BEEN TRYING TO KILL YOURSELF FOR YEARS?
TOUCHÉ.
THERE COULD STILL BE CASH IN THIS FOR YOU. THE SECOND SON OF JAPAN'S EMPEROR IS AN ARCHEOLOGIST, WORKING ON THE RUINS. THE KHMER ROUGE TOOK HIM, AND WE'RE HERE TO GET HIM BACK.
TOOK HIM WHERE?
SOMEWHERE OUT THERE.

SO WHERE'S THE EMPEROR'S KID?
GUARDS FIRST.
TWELVE IN THE PADDY. ANOTHER SIXTEEN IN THE VILLAGE.
THERE'S TOO MANY...
IF YOU'RE COMING, YOU MUST BE QUIET. SILENCE IS OUR GREATEST ADVANTAGE NOW.
GO THERE! GO TO THAT MAN!
THIS IS COMPLETELY NUTS. WHAT AM I DOING HERE?

KRAK
YEEEAAGH!
BUDDA BUDDA
BUDDA
THERE WAS NO EMPEROR'S SON.
NO. THESE PEOPLE BELONG TO A BROTHER TEMPLE OF OURS.

YOU'RE GODDAMN PRIESTS. BUDDHIST PRIESTS. AND YOU LIED TO ME.
IF YOU WISH TO FIND UNCLOUDED TRUTH DO NOT CONCERN YOURSELF WITH RIGHT AND WRONG.
THAT'S WHEN I LOST IT.
THERE'S YOUR SOUND OF ONE HAND CLAPPING.
A NOVEL APPROACH. YOU MIGHT MAKE AN INTERESTING STUDENT.
ME? A STUDENT? NO WAY.
PERHAPS YOU SHOULDN'T BE SO HASTY. YOU'VE FOUGHT A LONG TIME FOR NO REASON.
SOMETHING ABOUT HIS EYES. SOMETHING ABOUT THE WAY I'D WASTED THESE LAST YEARS.
MAYBE. MAYBE I'LL THINK ABOUT IT.
DO THAT. AND BY THE WAY -- I LIED ABOUT MY NAME AS WELL. YOU CAN CALL ME...
...Ishida. That was the name of Brennan's master. I will probably never know had they met.
At least Brennan had a master. If only I did. Someone to help me through this long, dark night of the Soul.
For the moment I suppose I will make do with brandy and sleep...

epic

epic

epic

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epic

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LOOK FOR EPIC #4 IN THIRTY DAYS.

BOOK

FOOTSLOGGERS AND SOLDIERS OF FORTUNE, PRIESTS AND DOCTORS, LOVERS AND POETS, KILLERS AND CADS. THE FOGOTTEN AND UNWANTED FROM THE SENTIENT RACES OF THREE GALAXIES HAVE BEEN BROUGHT TOGETHER TO BE TRAINED INTO THE MOST ELITE OF FIGHTING FORCES. THE ARE... THE **ALIEN LEGION.**

"TOUGH ENOUGH"

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CHUCK DIXON

ART
DOUGLAS BRAITHWAITE
MARK FARMER

COVER
DOUGLAS BRAITHWAITE

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